

Afri Hedge School at TU Dublin Annual Human Rights Hedge School

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Community Development and Youth Work Programme, Afri and CDYW Year
3 Students (BA Honours in Community Development and Youth Work)

Technological University Dublin

The BA (Hons) in Community Development and Youth Work (CDYW) has been running in TU Dublin – Blanchardstown Campus since 2009. Since 2012, the CDYW programme has collaborated with Afri, a human rights NGO, to deliver the Afri Hedge School, a one day human rights event as part of the Year 3 Human Rights module. The hedge school evolved as a collaboration involving the lecturer, year 3 students and Afri with support of the CDYW lecturers (TU Dublin, 2022; Afri, 2022).

Introduction and Context

The Afri Hedge School is presented here as a case study of student engagement. Students co-create the Hedge School with Afri and the module lecturer. Whilst the co-creation fulfils the group project assessment requirements for their human rights module, the activity goes much further. This annual activity also contributes to student engagement and learning in event management, media event promotion, workshop facilitation and human rights campaigning. The co-creation also involves showcasing the students' work to their peers (CDYW students in other years).

The format of the Hedge School includes keynote speakers, presentations, small group participative workshops, creative arts, a group action, promotion of the event in local and social media and evaluation.

The key issues which the Hedge School has focused upon are local and global, and include; civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights, climate change, sustainable development, ending direct provision, the right to housing/accommodation, addressing homelessness and challenging racism and discrimination and promoting peace and justice.

Project Outline

Principles of Human Rights Module

One of the five principles of community development work is '*Human Rights, Equality and Anti-Discrimination*' (AIEB, 2016). Similarly, the standards for youth work refer to '*a personal and professional commitment to equality, diversity, human rights, autonomy, freedom, responsibility and justice*' (NSETS, 2021).

The human rights module provides a theoretical and practical grounding in human rights developing students' knowledge skills and competence to adopt a rights-based approach in their work as professional community development and youth workers. (More detail in Appendix 2).

From the start of the module, students apply their learning about human rights to their lived experience in their communities and to make the connections between issues affecting people locally in their communities and globally through reflection and analysis.

Students are introduced to the staff and work of Afri (Action from Ireland) a human rights, social justice, peace and sustainability NGO.

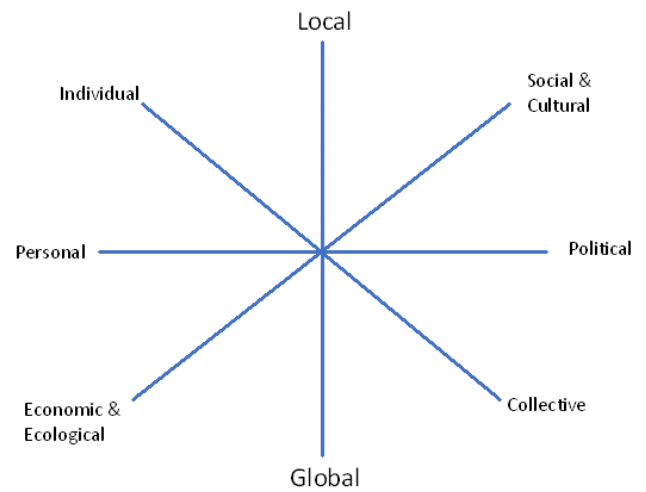


Image 1: Human rights approaches considered as part of the module

Action	Brief Description
Action A	<p>The work has been divided up and students can choose which aspect of the Hedge School they would like to engage with. The groups are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Event Organisation, Promotion, Facilitation and Action 2. Event Creative Arts & Evaluation. 3. Workshop on Key Theme 4. Workshop on Key Theme 5. Workshop on Key Theme <p>Lecturer and student co-host the event. The image below captures the image of the Afri Hedge School 2021 (online) and the creativity of the organising group who create the poster every year for the Afri Hedge School.</p>
Action B	<p>One group of students has the opportunity to prepare a press release for the event and distribute to local newspaper Gazette. The group also prepares an interview which two students give on the local radio station Phoenix FM.</p> <p>Recording of Interview (16th November 2021 for Afri Hedge School 2021) at Phoenix FM</p>
Action C	<p>Three groups of students have carried out research on a particular human rights issue which forms one of the themes of the Hedge School. They prepare and deliver a 30 minute workshop on the issue. Over the past number of hedge schools, students have prepared participative and engaging workshops on homelessness, racism, fast fashion, SDGs and the Palestine Israel conflict.</p>
Action D	<p>The planting of the Sustainabilitree - In 2019, TU Dublin Estates agreed to facilitate the planting of a tree to mark the Afri Hedge School and the Sustainable Development Goals. The students named the tree the Sustainabilitree. The tree was replanted in 2022. Students have tied their hopes and dreams for the future to the tree.</p>

Reflections on partnership

What worked well

Students worked in small groups on a particular aspect of the Hedge School. This enabled students to engage with a workshop theme and facilitate a group workshop at the event. Groups also worked on event organisation, facilitation, recording and evaluation.

In 2021, a Sustainability Walk was arranged which focused on six of the SDGs. The walk took place around the tree lined pathway of TU Dublin – Blanchardstown Campus (Appendix 1)

Students have reflected on how human rights globally are relevant in the Irish context, for example, in 2021, the global Black Lives Matter movement highlighted the issue of racism. Students applied the learning to the specific nature and context of racism in Ireland experienced by people of colour, Travellers and other ethnic groups.

Other: Afri provided inspiring Keynote speakers. Venue and food worked well.

What needed more attention

The Freire principle that education must be relevant to the lived experience of the participants is useful here (Freire, 1970).

Educators and activists are passionate about the issues they engage with and give attention. Often we arrive to the classroom with a fully developed analysis. The community development and youth work student is unlikely to have a fully developed analysis of human rights issues and their interconnected nature. More attention must be given to facilitate students' own critical reflection on these issues to develop, share and own their own analysis.

Historically, there has been a disconnect between the development education sector in Ireland which has traditionally focused on global development issues in the global South and the community and youth sector in Ireland which has traditionally focused on local issues of poverty, inequality and marginalisation affecting communities in Ireland (global North). Whilst there is a growing awareness and solidarity between marginalised communities North and South, more attention could be given to making meaningful connections between Afri, the CDYW Programme on the one hand, and grassroots communities on the other. This would strengthen the global and local impact of the Hedge School.



Image 2: Lecturers, students of the CDYW Programme at TU Dublin and Afri Staff & Supporters at Hedge School22. Previous Hedge Schools were delivered in-person. See further images and videos (Appendix 1)

Students leading on Hedge School development

In the ten years of the Afri Hedge School 2012 to 2022, the human rights issues we hear about on TV and Radio inevitably shape the focus of the Afri Hedge School. For example in 2015, the Paris UN Climate Conference COP21 resulted in the theme of Human Rights and Climate Change. In 2018, the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights marches in the US and North of Ireland shaped the theme of activism and struggle. In the wake of the Syrian conflict and resultant refugee crisis which reached Europe's shores, the focus of the Afri Hedge School 2016 was 'Let them land, let them stay' in support of refugees. In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement meant there was a focus on the theme of racism. A keynote speaker from MASI Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland addressed the Hedge School. In 2016, the life of humanitarian and 1916 Rising leader Roger Casement was remembered at the Hedge School and the students came up with workshop idea of developing our declaration of human rights for 2016 Ireland.



Image 3: Students and staff at the Afri Hedge School

Students have demonstrated creativity and engagement with the themes of each Afri Hedge School in their small groups. For example, in 2021, as Ireland emerged from the COVID19 pandemic, the crisis in housing and homelessness which directly affects the lives of students was a theme the students wished to address in the Hedge School.

Lecturers on the CDYW degree programme have facilitated the participation of all students from all years in this annual event. Staff and students have also contributed panel discussions, musical contributions, tree planting and much more at the Hedge School. There is space to explore some more collaboration across modules in the future.

CDYW students at TU Dublin are supported to reflect on the human rights issues from their experience. Often this results in students 'coming into voice' (hooks, 1994). Through the human rights module and indeed other modules which integrate across several key themes and issues, students develop an analysis to apply in their future roles as community and youth workers. A rights-based approach has relevance in their future work. The Afri Hedge School is a good example of student engagement in deciding the themes of the Hedge School, in engaging with its co-creation and in partnership with lecturers and an NGO. The programme is proud that a number of CDYW students become active in the Students Union on campus and successfully running for elected positions.

The Afri Hedge School event forms the CA (Continuous Assessment) for the module which accounts for 50% of the marks for the module. Students also submit a written reflection on the event identifying their key learning from the process and event.

The module lecturer meets with the Afri Co-ordinator to reflect on the hedge school annually. This includes review of the evaluations completed by participants on the day (CDYW lecturers, students, Afri staff and attendees).



Image 4: Collaboration is key to mutual learning at the Hedge School

Reflections

Student Reflection

Students completed the evaluation forms and reported:

"I learned in more detail about climate change and how it impacts communities in Asia and Africa. I feel motivated to take action on climate change."

"I learned about racism, direct provision and Black Lives Matter. The day was really good and there was a great variety of speakers, workshops."

(Afri Evaluation Sheets)

Students have expressed an interest in integrating global development issues into their community development practice and youth work practice. In particular students have developed a stronger interest in climate change issues, sustainable development goals and the issues of racism and direct provision.

Some students have completed placements in development education organisations such as Afri and Development Perspectives and Cultúr.

Some students have chosen to do their fourth year dissertation on a relevant human rights theme, for example community responses to homelessness, asylum seekers/refugees and climate change.

Staff Reflection

This is an area where we could improve in the future. Staff on the CDYW team are really supportive in facilitating the students from all CDYW years to participate in the event on the day. The testimony of one lecturer on the Afri Hedge School 2020 is evidence of the support and solidarity. We could in the future look at deeper involvement across modules not only human rights module in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the event.

"I wanted to pass my heartiest congratulations onto yourself, (student co-facilitator) and all of the year 3 Community Development and Youth Work students. They did a super job of organising and running a lively, interactive, informative and inspiring Afri Hedge School in an online environment this week. I have attended a myriad of online events/conferences/seminars since March so I really want to commend them on the super job that they did on Wednesday. It is difficult to capture that 'buzz' and engagement online, but they successfully managed it and we all came away with some practical actions."

(CDYW Lecturer).



Image 5: The Sustainabilitree demonstrating the SDGs in action

Appendices

Appendix 1—Videos (further videos available on the Afri YouTube channel)



Video 1: [Afri Hedge School 2017 \[link\]](#)



Video 2: [Afri Hedge School 2018 \[link\]](#)

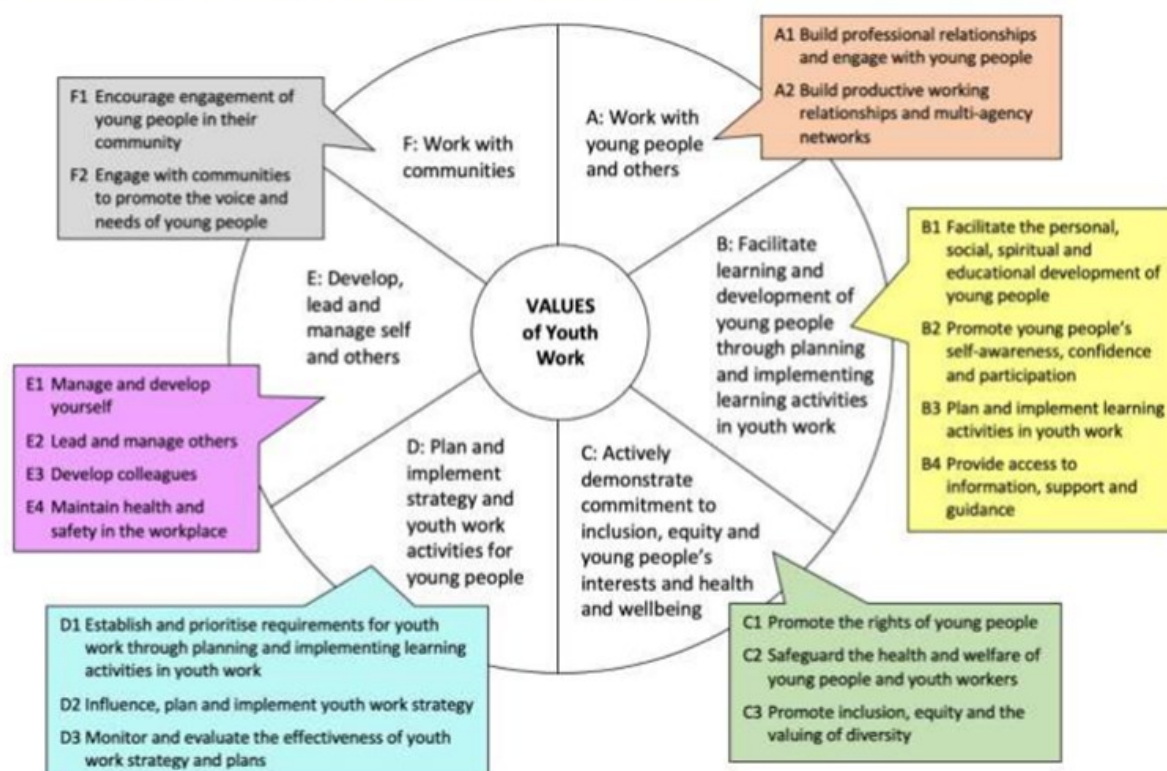
Appendix 2—Community Development and Youth Work Professional Standards



The Principles of Human Rights module in year 3 of the BA (Hons) in Community Development and Youth Work is one of a number of modules with direct relevance to this professional community development work standard 'Human Rights, Equality and Anti-Discrimination'

Appendix 2 continued

SUMMARY FUNCTIONAL MAP FOR YOUTH WORK



The Principles of Human Rights module in year 3 of the BA (Hons) in Community Development and Youth Work is one of a number of modules with direct relevance to professional youth work standards. In Ireland NSETS subscribes to the Joint ETS Benchmark Subject Standards for community and youth work which requires graduates 'to be able to: ii discuss and apply a personal and professional commitment to equality, diversity, human rights, autonomy, freedom, responsibility and justice' (QAA UK Subject Benchmark Statement Community & Youth Work) and the (National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (UK), NYA, 2019) refer above to the 'commitment to inclusion, equity and rights of young people'

Reference List

- Afri (2022) *Afri Education*. Dublin: Afri. Available at: <https://www.afri.ie/education/> [Accessed 7 June 2022].
- AIEB All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education & Training (2016) *All Ireland Standards for Community Work*. Galway, Ireland: Community Work Ireland. Available at: <https://www.cwi.ie/all-ireland-standards-for-community-work/> [Accessed 7 June 2022].
- National Youth Agency (2019) *National Occupational Standards for Youth Work*. Available at: <https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.nya2.joltrouter.net/wp-content/uploads/20210419173602/New-Nos.pdf> [Accessed 7 June 2022].
- NSETS North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (2021) *Profession Endorsement of Higher Education Programmes of Study in Youth Work*. Dublin: NYCI. Available at: <https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NSETS-Criteria-and-Procedures.pdf> [Accessed 7 June 2022].
- TU Dublin (2022) *Community Development and Youth Work*. Dublin: TU Dublin – Blanchardstown Campus. Available at: <https://www.tudublin.ie/study/undergraduate/courses/community-development---youth-work-tu992/?keywords=community%20development&courseType=>